

Deliverance at the Red Sea



Exodus 14–16

After many years of bondage under the Egyptian Pharaohs, the people of Israel finally left Egypt. God led them by day by means of a pillar of cloud and at night by a pillar of fire. Pharaoh's army caught up with them at the Red Sea. God divided the waters and the Israelites crossed over to the other side, while the Egyptian army drowned. Their journey through the desert then commenced. The people often murmured and complained about the hardships they had to endure. God helped them where necessary. He turned bitter water into sweet drinking water and sent them manna to eat. Once he even sent them a flock of quails.

The children are amazed at the ways and means by which God cares for and protects the people of Israel even in difficult situations.

Thousands of men, women and children leave Egypt with enormous herds of animals. After long years of slavery, the people of Israel are travelling through a barren land. Moses and Aaron are walking on ahead. Yet not they, but God himself is leading these people. During the day he shows them the way by means of a pillar of cloud and at night by a pillar of fire. When the pillar stops, the people rest. Everyone is happy and delighted to be free at last. The people trust Moses.

In the meantime no further bricks are being made in Egypt and work on the massive building-sites has come to a halt. The fields are also no longer being tilled. Pharaoh realizes just how much he has lost. Angrily he orders the Israelites to be fetched back. He appoints his most daring soldiers for this task and soon many war-chariots are in hot pursuit of the Israelites.

After several days the Israelites reach the shore of the Red Sea. Here the pillar of cloud stops and Moses gives the order that the tents be pitched. It is evening and the sun is already setting. Exhausted by their long journey, the people are sitting in front of their tents. Suddenly they see a cloud of dust on the horizon which gradually becomes larger and

larger. Is a storm coming up? No, it is Pharaoh's army closing in on them! The Israelites are paralyzed with fear. Some of them sob, others reproach Moses: "It is your fault that we will now all die! You led us out of Egypt! If only we had remained there and had continued working!" Confidently Moses replies: "Do not fear! The Lord will fight for you. Take down the tents, drive the herds together and follow me!" Moses sees how the pillar of cloud moves to the rear and positions itself exactly between the Israelites and the approaching Egyptians. On the side of the enemy the cloud brings on early nightfall and darkness. But on the side of the Israelites it is bright day. In this way the people are protected from the enemy. At God's command, Moses goes down to the shore, stretches out his staff towards heaven and holds his hand over the water. Suddenly a great wind comes up which continues to blow the entire night. It divides the waters of the sea and forms a dry passageway whilst to the left and right of it the water towers up in massive walls. The enormous caravan of Israelites, together with their animals, hastens through. Despite the fact that it is night, it does not become dark. The pillar of fire lights the way. In the meantime the Egyptian army has also reached the shore and the soldiers stare in disbelief at the fleeing people. Can this be possible? Are their eyes not deceiving them? Without much hesitation, however, Pharaoh's army hurries after them. The people of Israel have scarcely reached the other side safely, when Moses once again

God is merciful, gracious and patient – Moses

stretches out his hand over the sea at God's command. The separated water-mass settles into a smooth sea again and the Egyptian army with its horses and chariots drowns in its watery depths! The children of Israel are overjoyed at their deliverance. They gather to sing hymns of thanks and praise. Miriam takes up a timbrel and leads the singing: "I shall sing to the Lord, for he has risen up in triumph!" Everyone joins in. Filled with joy and confidence, the people of Israel continue their journey. A desert stretches out before them. During the day the heat is unbearable whilst at night it is bitterly cold. Wearily the people drag themselves through this desolate region day after day. Soon all are exhausted. Again and again they plead for water, but the stores have been used up. After three days the pillar of cloud finally stops above some rocks and scanty vegetation. "Water!" everyone shouts in great relief, but the water is bitter... Angrily some of them go up to Moses and blame him for their predicament. But the Lord helps once again. He speaks to Moses: "Throw that tree into the water!" Moses does as he is told and says to the people: "Now you can drink!" And indeed ... a miracle has happened! The water has become sweet and drinkable. All rush forward.



Who may drink first? The children? The strongest? It takes hours before they have all quenched their thirst. The animals are also given water. Then all the pitchers and leather bags are filled with the precious liquid. Strengthened, the people move on. But their thankfulness and trust in God does not last long. Until now they have been eating dried meat and bread which they brought with them from Egypt, but these supplies are slowly running out. The Israelites have been on the move for a month already. Many murmur: "If only we had stayed in Egypt. There we had enough bread and meat at least! Here we all have to die of hunger." Aaron and Moses are saddened by these complaints, but God is with them once again. He speaks to Moses from a cloud: "This evening you shall eat meat and tomorrow you shall have your fill of bread!" And truly ... towards evening there is a great rushing noise in the sky! Thousands of birds plummet to the ground between the tents ... they are plump quails! All the people have to do is collect these birds. Everybody eats their fill and once again the people are satisfied. The next morning a further miracle happens. The ground is covered with fine flakes. It looks like hoar-frost. The people are puzzled and ask: "What is it?" Moses explains: "It is manna, bread from heaven. God has given it to you." The Israelites quickly gather it up and taste it. It tastes sweet, like wafers made with honey. It can also be cooked or baked, but when it lies in the sun too long, it melts. From this day on they find manna wherever they happen to be. They no longer have to go hungry while in the desert. God looks after his people wonderfully.

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Moses left Egypt with the children of Israel. During the day God led them by means of a pillar of cloud and at night by a pillar of fire. God guided them safely through the Red Sea and rescued them from the Egyptian army. He cared for the Israelites in the desert by giving them water and manna.

- 1 We look at and discuss the picture with the children. Where are these people going? What are they hoping for? What will they experience during their journey?**
- 2 God helped the Israelites four times in situations which we would consider hopeless. They experienced God's might and omnipotence in a wonderful way. Let the children relate (passage through the Red Sea /drinking water / manna / quails).**
- 3 God will help you, too, in difficult situations. Ask him for help and believe in it as Moses did. The children relate.**